



# Media Advisory

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY  
David A. Berns, Director

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **MEDIA CONTACT**

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Visit our DES web site at  
[www.azkidsneedu.gov](http://www.azkidsneedu.gov)

**WHO\*:** DES Director David Berns, foster family representatives, local licensing agencies, child advocates and community volunteers.

**WHAT:** In celebration of National Foster Care Awareness Month in May, DES Director, David Berns, along with more than 400 foster and adoptive families and child welfare professionals will gather to tie more than 9500 **blue ribbons** (one for each child in Arizona's foster care system) on the trees at Heritage Square. The ribbons symbolize the critical needs of Arizona's foster children.

The event will begin with a brief press conference and will include ribbon tying, music, children's activities and an ice cream social.

**.WHY:** To encourage community members to change the life of an abused or neglected child by opening their home to a child in foster care or one waiting for adoption.

DES would like to have at least three placement options for every child in a group home or shelter, in order to have options for keeping them in their communities, keeping sibling groups together, and matching the best home to the child's specific needs. Currently children may be separated from their siblings or placed in institutional care, shelter, group homes and institutions. A major focus of DES has been to reduce the number of children in these settings. While the number of children in these settings has declined from a high of 2,306 children in September 2004 to 1,869 children in January 2006, DES would like to reduce these numbers further by increasing the number of available family foster homes.

Adoptive homes are also needed for children who have been freed for adoption. At the end of September 2005, 152 children had been freed for adoption but had no adoptive home.

**Information tables** will be set up at the event inviting community members to change the life of a child by becoming a foster parent, an adoptive parent, a mentor, a Court Appointed Special Advocate, a Foster Care Review Board volunteer, a donor or an advocate.

**WHEN:** Thursday, May 04, 2006  
3:15 p.m. Press conference  
3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. Ribbon tying event  
6:00 p.m. – 150 foster parents and their children will be attending the Arizona Diamondbacks game, courtesy of the Arizona Diamondbacks.

**WHERE:** Heritage Square  
7<sup>th</sup> Street and Monroe, Downtown Phoenix